THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

Edited by
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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2021
by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this title has been requested

ISBN: 978-0-415-65827-0 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-70960-4 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo
by codeMantra

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CONSCIOUSNESS

Therese Scarpelli Cory

I am aware of the apple, of seeing the apple, of myself seeing the apple; I am aware of my own awareness as mine. Were scholastic philosophers aware of these phenomena? The answer is certainly yes. The study of scholastic theories of consciousness and self-consciousness, however, is still very much a developing area of research. The last couple of decades have seen a surge of interest in medieval theories of consciousness and self-consciousness. Nevertheless, there is still a great deal of unexplored territory, particularly with respect to consciousness in the sensory arena and its integration with intellectual kinds of consciousness.

This chapter reviews the main theoretical trends in Latin scholastic thought on consciousness, focusing on thinkers that have already received some scholarly attention. (In the interests of space, I focus on Latin Scholasticism; entire chapters in their own right would be needed to address the topic as discussed among medieval Islamic philosophers or earlier medieval European thinkers; for entry points into those topics, see, e.g., Kaukua 2015; Marenbon 2019.) I will begin by explicating some idiosyncrasies of the debates that can pose difficulties for contemporary readers (see the section "Approaching the Scholastic Debates on (Self-)Consciousness"). I will then survey various thirteenth- and fourteenth-century approaches to each of the following: consciousness of extramental objects (see the section "Consciousness of Apples"), consciousness of one's own sensory states (see the section "Consciousness of Sensory Activity"), consciousness of intellectual acts and self-consciousness (see the section "The Intellect's Cognition of Its Acts and Itself"), phenomenality and subjectivity (see the section "Phenomenality, Subjectivity?"), and implications for physicalism (see the section "Consciousness and Physicalism").

Approaching the Scholastic Debates on (Self-)Consciousness

Medieval discussions of (self-)consciousness have a number of peculiarities that can make them less easily accessible to readers today. Let us begin by laying out some key features that readers should keep in mind in order to secure an easier avenue of approach into medieval thinking about consciousness.

Identifying the Phenomenon at Stake

One problem for readers today is that of mapping contemporary philosophical questions about consciousness onto the phenomena that medieval authors are investigating. It seems safe to say, however, that scholastic thinkers do not treat consciousness as a single overarching phenomenon

which poses its own free-standing philosophical problem, or which can be usefully discussed in the abstract (conscious-*ness*). Indeed, the question, "What makes a mental state be a conscious state?" cannot be mapped onto a scholastic debate without knowing (a) what kind of mental state it is, (b) what it is about, and (c) what degree of attentiveness is at stake.

a Scholastic authors adopt a multilayered approach to the mental, according to which an agent has different faculties enabling her to be conscious of objects under various aspects. So they often treat separately the *kind of consciousness* that can be achieved by the external senses alone or in concert with the internal senses, and that which involves the intellect. Parallel questions about consciousness can arise in both the sensory and intellectual arenas, but they are not always solved in parallel ways: many scholastic thinkers see unique theoretical possibilities opening up at the level of the intellect, which is typically held to be non-physical.

b Scholastic treatments of consciousness are usually divided up according to *different aspects under which an object is accessible to a cognitive subject*: e.g. the accidental or essential properties of an apple; one's own acts of seeing, imagining, or thinking about the apple; one's habits; or oneself. Each attracts its own cluster of philosophical issues. For instance, in asking why we attend to one object rather than another, or how sense and intellect relate to extramental objects, a scholastic thinker may address questions about transitive consciousness of extramental objects, access consciousness, and wakefulness. Again, a text examining the intellect's cognition of itself may address consciousness of mental states, self-reference, synchronic and diachronic unity of consciousness, indexicality, subjectivity, and self-consciousness.

c The concept of *degrees of attention* also plays a significant role in the medieval debates. Many scholastic authors take for granted that attentiveness comes on a sliding scale, and that it is possible to be attending to an apple, for instance, while being somewhat conscious of the tree that it is hanging in. In other words, one can be inattentively conscious of one thing while being attentively conscious of another. (And, for some thinkers, conscious cognitive states themselves can be distinguished from non-conscious cognitive states, as we'll see.)

Could the attentive/inattentive distinction be mapped onto the contemporary distinction between phenomenal and access consciousness? There is a reason to be cautious here. In the classic example of the phenomenal/access distinction, one driver pays careful attention to the road on the drive home from work (phenomenal consciousness), while another is so intent on a philosophical problem that she arrives home without any memory of steering the car, making turns, and so on (access consciousness). Such experiences are certainly among those envisioned by the medieval attentive/inattentive distinction. But the contemporary phenomenal/access distinction goes beyond merely differentiating two sorts of experiences. It also suggests a certain characterization of *what differentiates them*: namely, that in phenomenal consciousness, there is a "what it is like to control the car," whereas access consciousness lacks the "what it is like"—but it is not clear that medieval thinkers would accept this way of characterizing the distinction. Moreover, the scholastic attentive/inattentive distinction is meant to cover a much broader range of phenomena, including degrees of attentiveness. Finally, some scholastic thinkers arguably account for certain kinds of access consciousness in terms of non-conscious, rather than inattentively conscious cognitive relations.

In approaching a scholastic text, then, one must get clear on the phenomenon that the author is addressing. Is it my visual focusing on this apple? A vague consciousness of the greenness of the tree in which the apple is hanging? Some sort of inattentive consciousness of myself as a subject focusing on the apple? An attentive focusing on my act of seeing the apple? It is only after tracking down and assembling an author's various accounts of these various phenomena that one can begin to draw more general conclusions about the author's "theory of consciousness."

Medieval Discussions of (Self-)Consciousness: Where to Look?

Another difficulty for readers today is that of locating the (often surprising) contexts in which medieval thinkers broach topics relevant to theorizing about consciousness. Early in the thirteenth century, consciousness and self-consciousness are typically treated in connection with arguments for the soul's immateriality. Later, these topics became connected with questions such as the following: whether the intellect can cognize more than one thing at once; whether the soul cognizes itself "by its essence or by its act"; whether an act of sensing is sensed by the sense performing that act, or by another sense; whether every cognition is a cognition of itself; whether the agent intellect is always in act; whether the possible or agent intellects understand themselves; whether direct and reflex acts are identical (Putallaz 1991a; Zupko 2007; Jeschke 2011; Cory 2014; Perler and Schierbaum 2014).

The commentary genre also provides a cadre of standard *loci* for discussing consciousness or self-consciousness. For instance, in commentaries on the *Sentences*, discussions of self-consciousness might surface in connection with the mind as image of the Trinity (book 1); angelic or human cognition (book 2); awareness of one's own moral state (book 3). Commentaries on Aristotle provide a number of important *loci* for discussion: the common sense (*DA* 3.2); the intellect's self-understanding (*DA* 3.4); a moral agent's necessary awareness of himself as the one acting (*Eth.* 3.1); the virtuous person's awareness of and pleasure in acting (*Eth.* 9.9); or the First Intellect as self-thinking thought (*Met.* 12.7, 12.9). And in commenting on the *Liber de causis*, scholastic thinkers might address the metaphysical properties of entities capable of fully reflexive activities (props. 7 and 15).

As is typical of scholastic philosophizing, some of the most nuanced claims are made on the fly, as it were, in entirely unexpected contexts. Consciousness or self-consciousness might be treated in connection with the materiality of sense organs, attention and distraction, memory, dreaming, the perpetual activity of the agent intellect, certitude of being in a salvific state of grace, skeptical worries, an animal's ability to judge an object as harmful or beneficial to itself, the human and divine self-knowledge of Christ, and Trinitarian theology. Privacy, subjective perspective, and interiority may be dealt with in discussing whether angels or demons can read each other's and human thoughts, or the Averroist controversy over whether all humans share a single intellect.

Terminology

Finally, Scholastic terminology can be highly misleading for readers investigating theories of consciousness. "Consciousness" (*conscientia*) has a largely moral rather than psychological connotation in scholastic authors, who use instead terms like "cognition," "attention," or "consideration" (see the section "Consciousness of Sensory Activity"). Similarly, where contemporary discussions of consciousness make liberal use of the first-person pronoun, scholastic thinkers may speak rather of "soul," "intellect," or "oneself." Nevertheless, scholastic thinkers were not unaware of first-personal and subjective phenomena, as we shall see.

Moreover, even apparently familiar scholastic terms warrant caution. For example, contemporary philosophers distinguish reflexivity theories (which accord to mental states an intrinsic self-reference, usually assumed to be inattentive) from theories of reflection (according to which a mental state refers to *other* same-order or higher-order mental states as an attentive object). But the language of "reflecting upon" or "returning to" oneself is deployed quite loosely in scholastic texts: e.g. Ockham's "reflex act" is actually a second-order act.

Again, some scholastic thinkers use the term "object" loosely to refer to what causes or intentionally specifies a certain mental state. But to say that one's visual act is the "object" of cognition

is not necessarily to imply that the agent is *noticing* or *paying attention* to her visual act, or even that a higher-order act is involved. For similar reasons, phrases like "perceiving one's act" must be evaluated carefully by different authors.

Consciousness in Scholasticism

Consciousness of Apples

A mirror can only reflect an apple. But I am conscious of an apple. Why? What is the difference between a mirror's way of relating to the apple and the mind's?

Scholastic texts address such questions in terms of the psychology of *cognition*. So one might erroneously conclude that they were uninterested in consciousness. But the opposite is true: they take cognition to be philosophically interesting because it typically implies a *conscious* relationship to objects, such that "cognizing" is sometimes used interchangeably with terms such as "attending," "intending," "considering," or "cogitating."

Nevertheless, it would equally be a mistake to assume that for scholastic thinkers, *all* apple-cognizing implies being conscious of an apple in a perfectly attentive way. They recognize that the mind can be related to some objects in non-conscious, subliminal, or semi-conscious ways. For instance, objects are registered on the edge of a field of vision, pain makes it difficult to focus on study, a distracted reader sees words on a page without registering them—or conversely, a focused reader fails to hear spoken words addressed to her, which she can then nevertheless recall. Peter Auriol (d. 1322), for instance, describes what seems to be a kind of access consciousness, as when someone rattles off a psalm without thinking, or plays a zither in a distracted way (Noone 2014).

Scholastic thinkers adopted various strategies for explaining degrees of attentiveness within various conscious states. Such discussions often center on the question of whether a cognitive power can perform many acts or be informed by many "species" (representations) at once. For Aquinas, for instance, cognitive powers can only perform one act, informed by one species, cognizing one "whole" at a time. But his broad construal of "whole" enables him to distinguish inattentively cognized parts from attentively cognized parts, within a single act (Cory 2014: 138–42).

Olivi likewise holds that multiple objects can be actually grasped at once only if they fall under a single *aspectus* or gaze, perhaps thinking of the example of objects seen together within a field of vision. But the possibility of "gazing" itself further depends on the soul's already being directed toward its sensory environment, so as to register the presence of a sensory object, before it can attend to it voluntarily (Silva and Toivanen 2010: 276–277). Toivanen (2009: 219–226) has argued that this attentiveness is effected by a higher "common sense" (or further up the cognitive chain, the intellect in humans) directing itself toward the activities of the senses in a higher-order way, an interpretation that perhaps nudges Olivi in the direction of Ockham (see below).

Other scholastics, however, allow for a cognitive power to perform multiple acts and/or receive multiple species concurrently, with the soul bestowing its free-floating attention selectively. John Duns Scotus (d. 1308), for example, asserts that the senses are constantly receiving species (representations) from surrounding objects that do not trigger corresponding sensory acts unless the sense "brings itself to bear more intensely" on that object. He seems to be describing an entirely non-conscious cognitive state (Cross 2014: 22–27, suggesting similarities to access consciousness). Scotus also seems to be explicating a liminal or inattentive consciousness when he holds that although the soul can only have one "perfect cogitation" at a time, this can be accompanied by many simultaneous "imperfect cogitations" unless the former is strong enough to exclude the latter entirely (Cross 2014: 57–59).

In these theories, consciousness seems to be a primitive property of certain kinds of cognitive relations to objects. But William of Ockham (d. 1348) breaks with this trend to defend a

higher-order account of consciousness: even if my visual powers are activated by the apple, I am not *conscious* of it unless my act of seeing the apple is itself the object of a higher-order act. (We will see that he holds the same view at the intellectual level.) Such a higher-order view has been attributed to Aquinas (Stock 1958, but disputed by Pasnau 2001: 105), and Scotus (disputed by Cross 2014: 51).

Consciousness of Sensory Activity

In addition to being conscious of the *apple*, it seems that I am also conscious of *seeing* the apple. Scholastic thinkers typically explained consciousness of sensory activity in higher-order terms, motivated by a widely accepted view traceable to Avicenna's (Ibn Sīnā, d. 1037) *Liber de anima* V.2 and the anonymous *Liber de causis*, prop. 7: namely, physical sense organs (e.g. the eye) cannot reflexively grasp their own acts. Thus, I can be conscious of my seeing, hearing, or smelling only by a higher-order power, usually identified with the so-called "common sense" from Aristotle's *DA* 3.2, which senses the activities of the five external senses. (As an added complication, however, some scholastic thinkers also hold that the intellect can directly grasp the acts of lower cognitive powers, including the external senses.)

Little is known about the role of common sense in scholastic theories of consciousness, which has been largely neglected in recent studies (except for Toivanen 2013). In particular, the common sense's role as a higher-order perceiver of sensory acts may not be as straightforward as it might seem. The common sense also performs tasks that imply acquaintance with sensory *objects*: e.g. differentiating between red and sweet. So are sensory acts the *perceptual objects* of common sense in the manner in which apples are the perceptual objects of sight? Or does common sense rather perceive *apples as objects of seeing*, thereby incidentally providing consciousness also of the act of seeing (in which case questions immediately arise concerning the relation between the common sense's and external senses' consciousness of apples)? To answer these questions, more research is needed. What is known so far is that Olivi (Toivanen 2013: 276), and probably also Scotus (see below) adopt the second option. Interestingly, Chatton explicitly raises parallel questions in connection with Ockham's higher-order theory of intellectual consciousness (Brower-Toland 2012: 10–13).

Other complications can arise as well, as exemplified by Aquinas and Scotus, both defenders of a higher-order "common sense" account of how we are conscious of our sensory acts. In his earliest writings (e.g. *Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3), Aquinas rejects the reflexivity of the senses in favor of the common sense as the power that senses sensory acts. But he then appears to change his mind, arguing for the "incomplete" reflexivity of the senses, inasmuch as they can sense their acts, but not themselves (*De veritate* 1.9 and 10.9). Subsequently, he returns to a higher-order common sense account, yet later supplements it with some sort of sense-awareness of sensing (*Commentary on De anima* 2.26). In the latter, Aquinas seems to be influenced by Averroes's *Long Commentary on De anima* 2.136, which argues to avoid infinite regress that since the proper function of the eye is to see color, and the eye becomes colored in seeing color, therefore in seeing the color of an apple, the eye also secondarily sees its own internal color (see Cory 2017 and compare the intrinsic-reflexivity account in the section "The Intellect's Inattentive Consciousness of Itself and Its Acts").

Scotus's early *Quaestiones super De anima* 9 describes a spurious reflexivity whereby the common sense apprehends not only the acts of the lower senses, but *its own* act. He explains that the common sense perceives apples by means of a species (representation) that it receives from the external senses, and that becomes imprinted with the common sense's own apple-perceiving act. The species then "flows back down" into the external senses, whence the common sense once again receives it, but this time including the imprint of its own (previous) act. This curious cycle does not, of course, constitute genuine reflexivity, but is akin to inspecting one's bloodshot eye in a mirror. Nevertheless, the analysis provides a clue to the relation between higher-order and

lower-order acts in general (for the early Scotus at least): i.e. a higher-order power's representation of an apple *includes a representation of the lower-order power's act of seeing the apple*. In receiving this representation, a higher-order power can simultaneously perceive both the object of the lower-order act and the lower-order act itself.

The Intellect's Cognition of Its Acts and Itself

Turning to the intellect, we cross into the territory that has attracted most recent explorations into medieval theories of consciousness. For scholastic writers, the question of how I am conscious of *my intellectual acts about apples* is closely linked with the question of self-consciousness. Indeed, in the background of the debate is an overarching question about which is prior, logically if not temporally: cognition of *myself*, or cognition of *my acts*? Here, if anywhere, arise issues concerning self-reference—i.e. ascribing states to myself in the first person—or immunity to error through misidentification—i.e. the apparent impossibility of misidentifying myself as anything other than "I." Sometimes, however, one has to reconstruct which aspects of a theory are meant to address them (Cory 2012, 2014; Kaukua 2015). In a few cases, interestingly, scholastic thinkers explicitly accused opponents of being unable to account for these phenomena (Putallaz 1991a; Brower-Toland 2013; Schierbaum 2018).

The shifting landscape of scholastic thought on the intellect's cognition of itself and its acts can be most easily surveyed by identifying different scholastic approaches to three main cognitive conditions that the intellect can be in with respect to itself or its acts (discussed in the following sections). First, there is the intellect's primitive condition prior to all conscious experience, a state that some thinkers designated as a non-conscious self-knowing, and that others construed in a dispositional way. Second, some thinkers held that concomitant with its attentive consciousness to extramental objects, the intellect is inattentively conscious of its acts or itself. Third, it was generally accepted that the intellect is sometimes attentively conscious of its acts or itself, as when I am thinking about my thoughts. In constructing a complete theory of "how the intellect cognizes itself and its acts," a scholastic thinker will bundle together accounts for each kind of (non-) consciousness that he decides to admit into his system, and defenders can be found for nearly every possible combination of accounts. One trend to note, however, is that non-conscious self-knowing and inattentive self-consciousness are eventually seen as competing for the same conceptual territory. From the late thirteenth century onward, there is a drift away from the former toward the latter.

The Soul's Primitive Cognitive State with Respect to Itself

One problem that exercised scholastic thinkers was the following: before the soul becomes conscious of itself or anything else, does it have any cognitive relationship to itself? In other words, how is the soul situated by nature, i.e. primitively, with respect to self-cognition? There are two main solutions:

PC 1: Theories of non-conscious self-knowing, according to which the soul's primitive state is one of perpetual self-knowing (William of Auvergne, Jean de la Rochelle, Albert the Great, Thierry of Freiburg).

PC 2: Primitive readiness theories, which grant to the soul merely a primitive disposition for self-consciousness (Bonaventure, Aquinas) or a primitive inner-directed stance (Olivi).

Non-conscious self-knowing. The scholastic debate about non-conscious self-knowing was apparently triggered by sources such as Augustine and Avicenna, who maintained that attentive consciousness

of myself or my acts presupposes some prior acquaintance with myself. Augustine demands, for instance, how I could know that the Delphic command "Know thyself" applies to me, unless I already knew myself (*De Trinitate* 10.9.12). One of his answers, often cited by his medieval followers, distinguishes a perpetual self-knowing from an intermittent attention to itself: "The mind always remembers, understands, and loves itself, although it does not always think of itself as distinct from other things" (14.6.9).

Avicenna similarly points out that in order to use the indexical "I" correctly in propositions such as "I sensed," "I cognized," or "I did," I must *already* know that there is just one subject of these diverse conscious experiences, prior to those experiences and indeed prior to any conscious experience at all, including, therefore, conscious experiences of myself (Kaukua 2007, 2015; Black 2008: 23). Avicenna's reasoning seems to be premised on the worry (familiar from contemporary debates about self-reference) that an attentive conscious experience of myself is insufficient to account for the indexical and unitary properties of "I." After all, when I notice myself thinking about or seeing apples, why should I recognize this subject as *myself*—and indeed, as the *same* subject that is both thinking and seeing?

Avicenna's solution is that the soul is primitively acquainted with itself prior to any conscious experience whatsoever; i.e. it is always knowing itself *just by being itself*. This primitive self-acquaintance is non-conscious, and it is not attributable to any particular cognitive faculty; indeed, Avicenna identifies it with the soul's very being. Nevertheless, he describes it in cognitive terms as an "awareness" of oneself, leading some interpreters to conclude that he is describing a self-cognitive state that the soul or self *is* rather than *has* (Kaukua 2007: 103–132; Black 2008: 66). Functionally speaking, this state enables me to interact intellectually with the world from a unified first-person perspective and to use the first-person indexical correctly ("I think the apple was red") without pausing to introspect. It thus behaves like an innate access *self*-consciousness, similar to the access consciousness of the road that enables me to drive the car home without paying attention.

Avicenna's Latin readers found a dramatic illustration of this primitive self-acquaintance in his famous "Flying Man" thought-experiment, which describes a man created as an adult in a state of total sensory deprivation, floating in air and with his body-parts spread apart so as to preclude his sensing his own body. Avicenna thinks it is evident that this poor creature would at least have self-consciousness: "He would affirm the being of his essence; nor would he hesitate to affirm that he exists," despite lacking beliefs concerning the existence of a body. Thus, what the flying man experiences, so as to ground the belief that he exists, is a soul distinct from the body (Hasse 2000; Black 2008; Lopez-Farjeat 2012; Kaukua 2015). Now, the thought-experiment describes an attentive self-consciousness (Black 2008) and was probably intended merely to show the soul's independence from the body (Hasse 2007: 80–92). Nevertheless, in eliciting the intuition that the flying man would *of course* be conscious of himself despite sensory deprivation, the thought-experiment reinforces vividly the views Avicenna suggests elsewhere: self-knowing is so basic to the immaterial soul that it must always be knowing itself *non-consciously*, independent of, and prior to, all conscious experience.

William of Auvergne (d. 1249), for example, argues that the soul cannot be ignorant of itself or anything that pertains to itself, even its own incorporeal nature. His argument turns on the claim that x's mental presence suffices for cognizing x. An apple's vicarious presence through a species (i.e. a representation) is sufficient for cognizing the apple. But the soul already *is* itself! All the more so, then, does it cognize itself "by itself" or "by the presence of its truth." William does not ask, however, what constitutes mental presence, whether all modes of presence suffice for cognition, or what kind of cognition is at stake here. Indeed, for William, the soul's self-knowing hardly needs justification. Rather, what needs to be explained is why we do not always *consciously* understand ourselves; distraction by extramental objects is, of course, the culprit (Cory 2014: 30–33).

Albert the Great (d. 1280) reframed non-conscious self-knowing more precisely as an indiscernible perpetually running *cognitive activity*, the perpetual inner "shining" of the soul's intellectual "light," which has the function of illuminating or abstracting the natures of things. Even when not illuminating *something*, the light continues to shine, like the sun's rays passing through space without striking anything. This intramental activity is "indeterminate," by which Albert seems to mean that it is non-intentional and non-conscious—it is not a consciousness of oneself, or of anything at all (Cory 2014: 33–38). This notion reappears later in Thierry of Freiberg (d. 1310) (see Perler and Schierbaum 2014: 365–375).

Primitive readiness theories. For other scholastic theorists, however, the soul's primitive cognitive state vis-à-vis itself is merely one of innate readiness for self-consciousness. For instance, Aquinas refuses to accord to the human soul anything more robust than a natural "habitual cognition" or *disposition* enabling it to "proceed to an act of cognizing itself" (Putallaz 1991a; Cory 2014, although some have incorrectly read this as a non-conscious activity). Again, Olivi ascribes to the soul a kind of primitive inner-directedness that enables it to register instantly what happens within itself—a sort of permanent cognitive *stance*, rather than a kind of activity (Brower-Toland 2013; and see the section "The Intellect's Inattentive Consciousness of Itself and Its Acts"), complementing the outer-directedness that enables the soul to register sensory stimuli (see the section "Consciousness of Apples").

Aquinas's attacks on theories of non-conscious self-knowing left an important mark on the scholastic debate. In particular, he was responsible for a widely adopted framing of the debate as a dispute between two claims: namely, the claim that the intellect cognizes itself "by its essence or by itself" (indicating a non-conscious intellectual activity independent of conscious experience), and the claim that the intellect cognizes itself "by its act" or "by a species" (i.e. dependent on its being activated in conscious experience). His arguments against cognizing oneself "by one's essence" were perhaps more successful than are often realized, accepted even by some of his staunch critics such as Matthew of Aquasparta (d. 1302) (see Putallaz 1991a: 50–72). Thereafter, scholastic attention shifted toward evaluating how the intellect is inattentively or attentively *conscious* of itself or its acts, and the notion of an innate *non-conscious* cognitive activity largely fell by the wayside.

The Intellect's Inattentive Consciousness of Itself and Its Acts

Non-conscious self-knowing lies outside the framework of (and is prior to) all conscious experience. But for some scholastic thinkers, there is also an inattentive self-consciousness (or inattentive consciousness of one's acts) that is an integral part of conscious experience, and which precedes any attentive thinking about oneself or one's acts. For these thinkers, the mere fact of thinking about apples is sufficient to provide inattentive consciousness of the intellect and its acts. In other words, whenever the intellect is acting, it is already registering its own cognitive activity (and perhaps also itself as an agent) in some inattentive way, before it has even had a chance to attend to itself.

I describe the three theory-groups here in terms of inattentive consciousness of one's *acts*, noting that for some thinkers, the latter also implies consciousness of *oneself*:

IC 1: Intrinsic-reflexivity theories, in which the internal structure of the intellectual act guarantees my being inattentively conscious of it in the performance of it (Albert, Aquinas *per* Cory 2014).

IC 2: Inner-acquaintance theories, for which the intellect's direct presence to its act guarantees inattentive consciousness of that act (William of Auvergne, Olivi *per* Brower-Toland 2013, Chatton, possibly Buridan).

IC 3: Higher-order theories, in which first-order acts automatically produce second-order acts, guaranteeing that when I know an apple, I know that I know it (Aquinas *per* Putallaz 1991b; Olivi *per* Martin 2007; Rode 2010).

Intrinsic-reflexivity theories. One important source for scholastic theories of self-consciousness was Aristotle's statement that the intellect understands itself "like other things" (*DA* 3.4, 430a2), which was interpreted by some commentators to mean that intellectual self-consciousness is not only *dependent* on cognition of extramental things, but indeed *intrinsic to the structure of an intellectual act.* This "intrinsic-reflexivity theory" derives from an identity theory of cognition, in which to cognize *O* is in some sense to become *O*— so that in cognizing *O*, the intellect also cognizes itself.

Albert, for instance, describes an undifferentiated and unfocused self-consciousness intrinsic to all thoughts, according to which the mind "understands itself with all intelligibles as their subject, not distinct from them" (Cory 2014: 35–36). An interpretation of Aquinas as an intrinsic-reflexivity theorist has been developed at length in Cory (2014: 134– 173), arguing that Aquinas sees self-consciousness as primitive to the metaphysical structure of intellectual understanding. As a potency for thought, the human intellect has no form or structure of its own, and thus knows itself "by its act" or "by a species" in the sense that acts, formed by species (representations), are what gives the intellect the "shape" and actuality that manifest it to itself. This consciousness of the intellectual act implies self-consciousness, since agents are cognized through their acts: e.g. one does not experience "running" and infer a runner, but rather sees a runner running. (Aquinas's references to self-consciousness "by its act" or "by a species," however, have also been read as evidence for a higher-order theory; see below and the section "The Intellect's Attentive Consciousness of Itself and Its Acts".)

Inner-acquaintance theories. Like intrinsic-reflexivity theories, inner-acquaintance theories hold that consciousness of intellectual activity and even self-consciousness are primitive to the intellectual act. But they place explanatory weight, not on the act's *internal metaphysical structure*, but on the soul's being present to whatever happens within itself. An inner-acquaintance theory appears already in William of Auvergne, who argues that the soul cannot fail to be conscious of its mental states, e.g. "knowing, doubts, opinions, joys, sorrows, fears, and courage." It is not clear, however, whether consciousness of one's mental states also includes an experience of, or merely grounds an inference to, the soul-self. William merely states that to be aware of such mental acts while denying the existence of the soul-agent is like asserting the existence of curliness while denying the existence of hair.

Perhaps the best-known medieval proponent of an inner-acquaintance view is Olivi, who describes in detail an experiential and "quasi-tactile" consciousness of all one's mental acts and of oneself ("that it exists, lives, thinks, wills, sees, hears, and moves the body"). He seems to conceive of the soul as a kind of matrix within which reverberating acts are immediately although inattentively felt. The reason that the soul can register acts before attending to them lies in Olivi's version of a primitive readiness theory: namely, the soul is primitively, permanently directed toward itself (see the section "The Soul's Primitive Cognitive State with Respect to Itself"; Silva and Toivanen 2010; Brower-Toland 2013)—just as its directedness toward the sensory world enables it to register sensory stimuli before it attends to them (see the section "Consciousness of Apples"). For Olivi, then, any conscious act depends on the soul's being poised to register new acts and objects, like a radio antennae poised to pick up a signal even when the station is not broadcasting.

Chatton likewise argues that "all that is required" for consciousness of one's first-order thought of a rock is that "the thought be received in the mind." This consciousness of one's thought is the cause of the judgment "I am thinking about a rock," linking consciousness of intellectual states to *self*-consciousness (see Brower-Toland 2012: 14).

Higher-order theories. I will discuss higher-order theories of *attentive* consciousness of one's acts/oneself in more detail in the section "The Intellect's Attentive Consciousness of Itself and Its Acts." But more controversially, some scholastic thinkers have been read as proposing a higher-order account of *inattentive* consciousness. On these interpretations, a first-order act is automatically tracked by a second-order monitoring act, so that in thinking about apples, I automatically

also perceive my act of thinking about apples. While my attention is directed toward apples, any consciousness of my own thinking can only be inattentive. Nevertheless, this inattentive consciousness enables me simultaneously not only to think about apples, but to know that I am thinking about apples. Putallaz (1991b: 148–208) attributes such a view to Aquinas, referring to the second-order act as "reflexion in the strict sense"; against which see Cory (2014: 163–173, 195–198). Such a view is attributed to Olivi by Martin (2007) and Rode (2010); against which see Brower-Toland (2013: 153–162).

The Intellect's Attentive Consciousness of Itself and Its Acts

Whether or not the intellect has non-conscious or inattentively conscious self-cognition, a further question remains: under what conditions does it become *attentively conscious* of its own acts or itself? Scholastic answers can be grouped into three categories (again, described here in terms of attentive consciousness of intellectual acts, noting that for some thinkers, the latter also implies consciousness of oneself).

AC 1: Inward-turn theories, for which attentive consciousness of intellectual acts results from an introspective, voluntary inward "turn" of attention (William of Auvergne, Jean de la Rochelle, Bonaventure, Albert, Matthew of Aquasparta, Chatton, and Aquinas *per* Cory 2014).
AC 2: Higher-order theories, for which attentive consciousness of intellectual acts results from their becoming the object of a higher-order act, sometimes called a "reflex act" (Aquinas *per* Pasnau 2001, Olivi, Scotus, Ockham).
AC 3: Empiricist theories, which take to heart the impossibility of the senses perceiving intellectual acts or the intellect itself, and thus subject intramental realities to the same conceptualizing process as any other object that is known indirectly without ever being sensed (the early Scotus concerning the soul/intellect, Aquinas *per* his successors, and to a certain extent Buridan).

The boundary between the inward-turn and higher-order theories is sometimes fuzzy, especially in earlier thinkers, because both hold that one becomes attentively conscious of intellectual acts by directing oneself mentally toward them. The difference between the two theories, I take it, is that inward-turn theories propose a *merely volitional* condition for "turning" attentively toward one's own acts, i.e. the voluntary directing of attention inward—whereas higher-order theories additionally propose a *cognitive* condition, i.e. the formation of a distinct higher-order cognitive act.

Inward-turn theories. On this view, in order for the intellect to become attentively conscious of itself or its acts, it is sufficient that it merely "turn inward." This "turn," construed as a voluntary redirection of attention, causes an experiential attentive consciousness of one's acts or oneself, not an abstract conceptualization. Bonaventure (d. 1274) exemplifies one version of this theory, which holds that *nothing other than* an act of the will is needed in order to think about oneself and one's acts. Matthew of Aquasparta, however, represents an alternate version, according to which the intellect first needs to be activated in cognizing other things, before it is able to turn its attention inward. Once it is activated in relation to some extramental object through a species, the intellect and its acts immediately and directly appear within its internal "view" (*conspectus*). This internal, apparently inattentive, self-appearing enables the soul subsequently to "return" to itself, by which Matthew seems to mean that it turns its attention inward (Putallaz 1991a: 13–84). On one reading, Aquinas holds a similar inward-turn theory, according to which becoming attentively conscious is merely a matter of attending to what is already inattentively manifested through the intrinsic reflexivity of the act of thinking about apples—namely, oneself-in-the-act-of-thinking (Cory 2014: 163–173).

Higher-order theories and the regress problem. Higher-order theories account for attentive consciousness of one's intellectual acts by means of a second-order act that is directed at the first-order act. A higher-order theory of attentive self-consciousness has been attributed to Aquinas (Pasnau 2002: 346–347); Olivi (Brower-Toland 2013; Perler and Schierbaum 2014: 132); and Scotus (Cross 2014: 52).

Scotus, interestingly, emphasizes the immediacy and intuitivity of this higher-order experience of one's intellectual acts; yet, it is not until his later writings that he also asserts that the intellect can also experience itself or the soul. He clearly states that I introspectively experience these acts as *mine*, and their actor as *myself*, although without explicitly discussing what grounds this self-ascription (Cross 2014: 52–57).

Worries about self-reference and other well-known challenges to higher-order theories were explicitly raised later in the Ockham-Chatton debate. For Ockham, I am conscious of apples *and* conscious of perceiving apples, just in case I am performing a second-order act ("the reflex act") whose object is the first-order act directed at apples ("the direct act"). The reflex act thus accounts not only for consciousness of objects (see the section "Consciousness of Apples"), but also for consciousness of the direct act.

For Ockham, reflex acts are triggered whenever there is a direct act, so that normally speaking, one is (presumably inattentively) conscious of one's occurrent act. But this view leaves him open to infinite regress concerns, as Chatton objected. To block the regress, Ockham holds that due to the intellect's limited attention span, it cannot keep piling on reflex acts indefinitely, but normally becomes exhausted with the first reflex act (see Michon 2007; Brower-Toland 2012, 2014; Schierbaum 2018).

Ockham also faces objections concerning indexicality and self-reference. Since he denies that the intellect can experience *itself*, he seems shorn of resources for explaining why the intellect ascribes first-order acts to *itself*, let alone justifying anything like immunity to error through misidentification. Against him, Chatton argues that indexicality cannot be a primitive feature of a higher-order attentive consciousness of one's acts. Rather, it must be a feature of a prior same-order inner acquaintance with one's acts. Ockham, however, seems to hold that indexicality can be reduced to other, primitive properties of direct acts (Schierbaum 2014, 2018).

Empiricist theories. Toward the end of the thirteenth century, the "Aristotelian" approach to self-consciousness began to be associated with the claim that since intramental realities cannot be the objects of empirical sensory experience, one cannot experience them at all, but only understands them indirectly through constructed imaginative representations or inferences from their effects, in the manner in which one understands the long-vanished Colossus of Rhodes or the existence of God (see Matthew of Aquasparta's critique of this view, Putallaz 1991a: 35). Empiricist theories thus do not so much attempt to account for attentive self-consciousness. Rather, they tend to deny its possibility, in favor of an abstractive or inferential conceptual knowledge of the soul (although some saw the theory as leaving room at least for an experiential consciousness of one's acts).

In his early writings, Scotus likewise appealed to the intellect's reliance on phantasms in order to explain why the soul can only infer its own existence and the existence of its intellectual power, Hume-style (Michon 2007: 126–127; Cross 2014: 52–57). Later, however, Scotus allowed that not only intellectual acts, but the soul itself can be objects of a higher-order act. The Dominican defender of Aquinas, Thomas Sutton (d. 1315), similarly argued that the soul can come to cognize itself only by inference (Putallaz 1991a: 191–257; Perler and Schierbaum 2014: 219–226). Perhaps because of this misinterpretation by his own disciples, and because of his defense of an "Aristotelian" view of self-consciousness, Thomas Aquinas was also assumed to defend an empiricist theory. Consequently, he was excoriated by his Franciscan critics for failing—as they thought—to

accommodate direct self-consciousness (Putallaz 1991a: 34–36), a critique that persists in the literature today (e.g. Martin 2007; against this view, Cory 2014: 92–114).

Complicating this picture of empiricist theories in scholasticism is the fact that scholastic thinkers of all stripes made room for acts of conceptualizing the soul's nature through discursive reasoning, without intending thereby to deny the possibility of experiential modes of self-consciousness or consciousness of one's own mental states. For instance, like Sutton, John Buridan (d. 1361) argues that one can only conceptualize one's own intellect through reasoning. Yet, recent studies have suggested that Buridan presupposes that all mental activity carries along with it an inattentive consciousness of one's *mental states* (Perler and Schierbaum 2014: 489–497), or even of the intellect itself (Brower-Toland 2017).

Phenomenality, Subjectivity?

Some commentators have argued that phenomenality, or the "what it is like" to be in a particular conscious state, is a concept foreign to scholastic thinkers, who are more interested in analyzing the metaphysical structure of conscious acts (King 2007). And it is quite true that scholastic thinkers do not reflect on the "what it is like" of experience as a self-standing philosophical problem with implications for the mind-body problem.

Nevertheless, scholastic thinkers were certainly aware of—and some even attempted explicitly to account for—the phenomenal properties of conscious acts. The question of whether damned souls are tormented by physical fire provides an opportunity for some authors to distinguish the phenomenal feel of being painfully burned, from the physical consuming of flesh by fire (Toivanen 2009: 102–103; Cross 2014: 40–42). Another intriguing case is that of Peter Auriol, who describes objects as having *esse apparens* or "appearing being" in the mind, possibly referring to the "what it is like" to experience them.

It is also now beyond dispute that some scholastic thinkers explicitly address phenomena associated with subjectivity, including, e.g. indexicality and self-reference (Brower-Toland 2012, 2013; Cory 2014: 199–214; Cross 2014: 52–57; Schierbaum 2018); diachronically unified consciousness (Cory 2012, 2014); privacy of perspective (Cory 2016), proprioception, or awareness of one's bodily positioning (Yrönsuuri 2008), and the certitude of judgments such as "that I exist" or "that I think" (Boulnois 2007). Animal subjectivity has been the subject of some recent interesting work (Toivanen 2009, 2013; López-Farjeat 2012). There is, however, an ongoing debate about the extent to which different thinkers are alive to notions of subjectivity; see, e.g., Marenbon (2019).

Consciousness and Physicalism

As we saw earlier, scholastic thinkers generally denied the possibility of reflexivity or same-order reflection for physical cognitive faculties (see Zupko 2007: 89–90), with the possible exception of Aquinas. Aquinas's tentative and sporadic defenses of some sort of sensory reflexivity, however, stem from the conviction that there is something not-fully-physical about *sensation*, not from a rejection of the principle that something fully physical cannot be reflexive. Indeed, a number of scholastic thinkers conversely viewed full reflexivity and/or self-knowledge as evidence for the intellect's immateriality, though their arguments remain to be studied in depth.[1]

Note

1 I would like to thank Susan Brower-Toland and John Schwenkler for their helpful critiques.

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